



MEDICAL AND RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MARAC)

MARAC Advisory Statement: COVID-19 Vaccines

December 14, 2020 - News is evolving rapidly about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines. Early results from the COVID-19 vaccine trials are very promising, although the true benefits and risks will not be known until a larger number of people receive the vaccine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists sickle cell disease (SCD) as one of the populations vulnerable to severe COVID-19. Sickle cell disease raises the risk for serious problems with COVID-19, especially when compared to the same age in the general population.

What about side effects?

Side effects from the vaccine are possible. Reported side effects include redness and soreness at the injection (shot) site, headache, fever and body aches. These side effect symptoms go away after a few days. The second injection may have more of these side effects than the first injection, but they also went away after a few days. Two severe allergic reactions were reported and seemed to occur only in people with a history of severe life-threatening allergies.

Based on current information, MARAC recommends that people with sickle cell disease receive COVID-19 vaccination.

- The benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks for people with SCD. Vaccination is worthwhile compared to the risks of having COVID-19 disease in people with SCD.
- Consult with your doctor or health care team about whether your personal medical condition causes an exception to this general recommendation. Key risk conditions for the vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna (mRNA vaccines) are a history of life-threatening allergic reactions to polyethylene glycol (PEG), another vaccine or other injectable medicine.
- The fact that SCD affects the immune system should not cause a safety problem for COVID-19 vaccines.
- If a clinical trial is available, consider joining so that we can understand how vaccines or treatments work best for people with SCD.
- Don't relax your precautions right after getting the vaccine. You might still get infected in the few weeks following vaccination. You could still give infection to those around you. Continue to wear a mask covering your nose and mouth. Wash your hands often. Maintain physical distance. Avoid crowds, and avoid people who are ill.

Frequently Asked Questions based on CDC information as of 12-13-2020

Is a booster dose of vaccine necessary? Can I get two doses of two different kinds of vaccine?

We don't really know. The testing was done with two doses of each vaccine so that is the recommended plan. Getting just one dose or a mixture of two vaccines might be a waste of the shot and leave you with incomplete protection. The **v-safe** smartphone app will remind you when it is time to get the second dose.

If I had COVID-19 disease should I still get a vaccination against COVID-19?

Probably yes, but wait until your isolation period is over. Talk to your doctor.

If I just had COVID-19 exposure, should I still get a vaccination against COVID-19?

Probably yes, but after a quarantine period. Talk to your doctor. If you live in a group setting, it might be worthwhile to protect others by getting the vaccine without waiting for quarantine to end.

How is the safety of these vaccines being tracked?

v-safe is a smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccination. This will allow you to quickly share any vaccine side effects with the CDC.

I have some allergies. What allergy history is worrisome?

- Key risk conditions for the mRNA vaccines are a history of life-threatening allergic reactions to components of the vaccine, to another vaccine or injectable medicine, or allergy to polyethylene glycol (PEG). Talk to your doctor. You might need to be deferred from the mRNA vaccine, or just monitored for 30 minutes after the injection.
- Allergic reactions that were not life-threatening and allergies to food, insects, oral medications, dust, or pollen are probably OK for the mRNA vaccines. Talk to your doctor. You should be watched for at least 15 minutes after the vaccine.
- Talk to your doctor.
- Sign up for **v-safe** from your smartphone's browser at vsafe.cdc.gov.

SCDAA Medical and Research Advisory Committee Members

Miguel R. Abboud, MD

Professor of Pediatrics and Pediatric Hematology-Oncology
Chairman
Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine
American University of Beirut, Lebanon

Biree Andemariam, MD

Vice Chair, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America
Director, New England Sickle Cell Institute
Associate Professor of Medicine
University of Connecticut Health
Farmington, Connecticut

Shawn Bediako, PhD

Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Maryland Baltimore County
Baltimore, Maryland

Andrew Campbell, MD

Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders
Children's National Health System
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences
Washington, DC

continued on next page

Raffaella Colombatti, MD, PhD

Physician Azienda Ospedaliera-Università di Padova
Department of Womens' and Child Health
Clinic of Pediatric Hematology Oncology
Via Giustiniani 3 35129
Padova, Italy

Lori Crosby, PsyD

Co-Director, Innovations in Community Research,
Division of Behavioral Medicine & Clinical Psychology
Co-Director, CCTST, Community Engagement Core
Psychologist, Research, Behavioral Medicine & Clinical
Psychologist
Cincinnati Children's
Professor, UC Department of Pediatrics
Cincinnati, Ohio

Deepika Darbari, MD

Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders
Children's National Health System
Professor of Pediatrics
George Washington University School of Medicine and
Health Sciences
Washington, DC

Payal Desai, MD

Associate Professor
Director of Sickle Cell Research
The Ohio State University
JamesCare at Ohio State East Hospital
Columbus, Ohio

James Eckman, MD

Professor Emeritus, Hematology & Medical Oncology
Emory University School of Medicine
Department of Hematology and Medical Oncology
Atlanta, Georgia

Mark Gladwin, MD

Professor and Chair
Department of Medicine
Founder, Pittsburgh Heart, Lung, and Blood Vascular
Medicine Institute
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Jo Howard, MB Bchir, MRCP, FRCPath

Head of Red Cell/Sickle Cell Service
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
London, United Kingdom

Lewis Hsu, MD, PhD

Chair, Medical and Research Advisory Committee,
Sickle Cell Disease Association of America
Chief Medical Officer, Sickle Cell Disease
Association of America
Director of Pediatric Sickle Cell
Professor of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology
University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Baba Inusa

Professor of Paediatric Haematology
Lead Consultant Paediatric Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia
Evelina London Children's Hospital
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
Women and Children's Academic Health
Faculty of Life Sciences and Medicine
King's College
London, United Kingdom

Elizabeth Klings, MD

Associate Professor of Medicine
Director, Center for Excellence in Sickle Cell
Disease
Director, Pulmonary Hypertension Center
Boston University School of Medicine
Boston, Massachusetts

Lakshmanan Krishnamurti, MD

Professor of Pediatrics
Director of Bone Marrow Transplant
Joseph Kuechenmeister Aflac Field Force Chair
Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorders Center
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta/Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

Sophie Lanzkron, MD

Director, Sickle Cell Center for Adults
The Johns Hopkins Hospital
Baltimore, Maryland

Julie Makani, FRCP, PhD

Associate Professor
Department of Haematology and Blood Transfusion
Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Caterina P. Minniti, MD

Director, Sickle Cell Center Montefiore Health System
Professor, Departments of Medicine and Pediatrics
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Bronx, New York

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Genice T. Nelson, DNP, APRN, ANP-BC

Program Director, New England Sickle Cell Institute & Connecticut Bleeding Disorders Programs, UConn Health Farmington, Connecticut
Board Member, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America

Isaac Odame, MB ChB, MRCP(UK), FRCPath, FRCPC, FRCPC

Professor, Department of Paediatrics
University of Toronto
The Hospital for Sick Children Division of Haematology/Oncology
Toronto, Ontario

Kwaku Ohene-Frempong, MD

Director Emeritus, Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center
Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics, University of Pennsylvania
President, Sickle Cell Foundation of Ghana
Emeritus Board Member, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America

Gwendolyn Poles, DO

Former Medical Director, Kline Health Center
Faculty, Internal Medicine Program
UPMC Pinnacle
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
Board Member, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America

John Roberts, MD

Yale Adult Sickle Cell Program
Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale New Haven
New Haven, Connecticut

Wally Smith, MD

Professor
Scientific Director, VCU Center on Health Disparities
Director, VCU Adult Sickle Cell Program
Department of Internal Medicine Division of General Internal Medicine
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia

Crawford J. Strunk MD

Director, Sickle Cell Disease and Hemoglobinopathy Clinic
Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Program
ProMedica Ebeid Children's Hospital
Toledo, Ohio

Immacolata Tartaglione, MD PhD

Department of Woman, Child and General and Specialist Surgery
Università degli Studi della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
Naples, Italy

Marsha Treadwell, PhD

Director, Sickle Cell Care Coordination Initiative
Regional Director, Pacific Sickle Cell Regional Collaborative
Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics
University of California San Francisco Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland
Oakland, California

Winfred C. Wang, MD

Emeritus, St. Jude Faculty
Member, Department of Hematology
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
Memphis, Tennessee

Russell E. Ware, MD, PhD

Director, Division of Hematology
Co-Director, Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute
Director, Global Health Center
Marjory J. Johnson Chair of Hematology Translational Research
Cincinnati Children's
Professor, UC Department of Pediatrics
Cincinnati, Ohio

Julie Kanter Washko, MD

Associate Professor, Division of Hematology Oncology
Director, Adult Sickle Cell Clinic
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Birmingham, Alabama

Kim Smith-Whitley, MD

Professor of Pediatrics
Director, Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center
Clinical Director, Division of Hematology
The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Board Member, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America

Wanda Whitten-Shurney, MD

CEO & Medical Director
Sickle Cell Disease Association, Michigan Chapter Inc.
Detroit, Michigan
Board Member, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America

Ahmar U. Zaidi, MD

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center, Children's Hospital of Michigan
Director of Physician Network Development, University of Pediatrics
Wayne State University/Central Michigan University School of Medicine
Detroit, Michigan